

**ART OF MEDICINE**

**Embodied Experiences of Implants**

Holland Houdek, MFA

**Abstract**

*Hyperbolic (Implants Series III)* examines through 40 sculptures, 6 of which are featured in this article, how devices implanted become embodied. These sculptures are inspired by real prostheses and surgical implantation procedures. By exaggerating features of these devices, patients' experiences of device-based clinical interventions are creatively imagined. Viewers and readers are invited to consider how implantation and prosthetic technologies simultaneously shape and are shaped by human mortality and morality.

**Ethical Complexity of Implants**

Implants are politicized, contested, and profound objects, often of immeasurable material, symbolic, and personal value. They have power to heal and restore and to give and prolong life, and their design and production yields high profit margins for large medical device companies.<sup>1</sup> The United States is the largest international exporter of **implantable devices**,<sup>2</sup> but we would do well to ask whether, when, and how implantation into the bodies of poorer global citizens can be complicated—if not rendered impossible—by bureaucracy, black market entanglement, high tariffs, and lack of appropriate expertise.<sup>3,4,5,6,7</sup> For many reasons, waste from device “expiration” can be a problem in some countries to which devices are exported,<sup>8</sup> and, regardless of location, some devices are recalled post implantation due to adverse reactions.<sup>9</sup>

***Hyperbolic (Implants Series III)***

This series has a total of 40 sculptures, 6 of which are featured here. Each sculpture is designed to exaggerate features of implantable devices, some of which are more common than others in the Global North and Global West (eg, **breast implants**, shoulder prostheses, hip prostheses, heart valves, penile implants, spinal disk replacements). The sculptures and their materials suggest suitability for placement in anatomies that don't really exist; readers and viewers are invited to consider an imagined implantee's place in, say, the history of aesthetics or the history of using metallurgy to adorn or defend one's body.

**Figure 1.** *Nelumbo Mastoplasty (Lotus Breast Implant)*, 2017



**Media**

Hand-fabricated copper, pierced; silicone breast implant; Swarovski crystals (621); bead-blasted patina, 7.75" x 7.75" x 2.5".

**Caption**

*Nelumbo Mastoplasty* reimagines a breast implant through the symbolic and ornamental lens of a breast plate. Layered concentric discs, adorned with delicate cutouts and patterns, form a floral structure reminiscent of a lotus in bloom. At the center, a silicone breast implant's translucent yellow mesh evokes the inner workings of implantable medical devices and suggests their transformative, healing promise. The work's combination of organic and technological motifs draws attention to the tension between artificial enhancement and natural form.

**Figure 2.** *Nelumbo Mastoplasty (Lotus Breast Implant)*, detail image, 2017



**Media**

Hand-fabricated copper, pierced; silicone breast implant; Swarovski crystals (621); bead-blasted patina, 7.75" x 7.75" x 2.5".

**Caption**

This close-up image of the above magnifies details, such as piercings, stone settings, and lotus-like patterns that surround and glorify the integrated silicone yellow mesh.

**Figure 3.** *Polytubed Urethral Structure (Urethra Replacement)*, 2016





**Media**

Hand-fabricated copper, raised; urethra implant; Swarovski crystals (583); bead-blasted patina. 5.75" x 15" x 7".

**Caption**

Hammered metal, crowned with a dense arrangement of tube-like protrusions adorned with black Swarovski crystals, evokes a hybrid of organic and mechanical urethral anatomy. This sculpture invites viewers and readers to reflect on the intricacy of bodily systems and parts that render us vulnerable when in need of **clinical attention or repair**.

**Figure 4.** *Polytubed Urethral Structure (Urethra Replacement)*, detail image, 2016

**Media**

Hand-fabricated copper, raised; urethra implant; Swarovski crystals (583); bead-blasted patina. 5.75" x 15" x 7".

**Caption**

Detailed image of protruding tube-like structures and stone settings.

**Figure 5.** *Cardiovascular Complex (Heart and Vein Implant)*, 2017



**Media**

Hand-fabricated copper, pierced; Swarovski crystals (475); bead-blasted patina, 9.75" x 8.5" x 4.75".

**Caption**

This patinaed copper sculpture reimagines a heart implant. Its central form evokes a stylized heart, adorned with lace-like intricacies. Extending from the heart are exaggerated, tubular structures that, despite their industrial aesthetic, resemble blood vessels and invite a viewer or reader to visualize a heart replacement elaborately bejeweled.

**Figure 6.** *Cardiovascular Complex (Heart and Vein Implant)*, detail image, 2017



**Media**

Hand-fabricated copper, pierced; Swarovski crystals (475); bead-blasted patina, 9.75" x 8.5" x 4.75".

**Caption**

This detailed image of the above depicts vein-like structures extending from the rendered heart implant and covered in small stone settings.

**References**

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**Holland Houdek, MFA** is an associate professor and the art gallery director at Nazareth University in Rochester, New York. Her work focuses on medical implants, the body, and embodied experience; has been exhibited in top galleries, exhibitions, books, and publications; and has received several competitive awards. She holds an MFA from Syracuse University and a BFA from University of Wisconsin-Stout. Find more about her and a digital gallery of the other work in this and other series by visiting <https://hollandhoudek.com/>.

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#### Conflict of Interest Disclosure

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